CALIFORNIAN 1/62

Dissecting the Press

Miami Herald Knew About Cuba Invasion Two Months in Advance

It came out during a debate between editors and government information officers on "the people's right to know." The debate was one of the many tactics the Associated Press Managing Editors Assn., which staged it, and other newspaper organizations have been using in an attempt to get the government to stop classifying so much information secret. This is a favorite complaint of all newspaper editors. But by the time George Beebe of the Miami Herald had finished his comments, there was a question of which is keeping the most news from the public: the government or the press itself. Said Beebe:

"We in Miami knew about the Cuban invasion coming up about two months before it happened. Everyone in Miami knew about it. The Cubans, who were extremely excited about it, were coming to our paper and telling us about it. We were invited to send a reporter and a photographer on the invasion fleet. I had a five-part series on my desk for two months, but I didn't want to be the first one to release [illegible]. We thought we were being very responsible when we went to Washington. We went to the CIA—we went to the State Department—and we went to the FBI, seeking advice. All these agencies said they knew nothing about it and they were sure there was nothing to it. Mr. Secretary (he was talking to Assistant Secretary of Defense Arthur Sylvester), in peace time, who do you turn to to get answers as to whether or not a story is detrimental to national security?"

Sylvester did not answer the question.

Another question, this one to be asked of Beebe, is: Did you feel it was your public responsibility to report that an invasion of Cuba was being planned in Miami?